

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 14585

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, UN, BG, IN

SUBJECT: FARAKKA BARRAGE

REF: STATE 243458

1. WE AGREE THAT A KEY ELEMENT FOR THE U.S. IN THE TYPE OF EFFORT ENVISAGED IN REFTEL WOULD BE TO PRECENT IT FROM APPEARING TO INDIA AS A U.S.-SPONSORED INITIATIVE, WHICH WE BELIEVE WITH DEPT, INDIA WOULD REJECT POLITELY BUT WITH DEEP SUSPICION. WE ARE UNCERTAIN THIS CAN BE DONE SUCCESSFULLY AND ARE CONCERNED THAT AT SOME JUNCTURE AMERSINGHE OR SOME OTHER PARTY MIGHT INFORM THE INDIANS (AND BANGLADESHIS) THAT THE IDEA FOR "NEUTRAL FACT FINDING" INVESTIGATION, AND POSSIBLY IBRD INVOLVEMENT, CAME FROM U.S. THE INDIANS DO NOT, WE BELIVE, WANT ANY RPT ANY OUT-SIDE INVOLVEMENT, SPECIFICALLY IBRD, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE INTERESTED (AS THEY HAVE TOLD THE BDG REPEATEDLY) IN COLLECTING MORE DATA ON THE FARAKKA ISSUE.

2. FORMER ADDITIONAL SECRETARY (BANGLADESH) AJMANI TOLD US INFORMALLY SEVERAL WEEKS AGO THAT INDIA WOULD NOT WANT TO REPEAT THE INDUS VALLEY IBRD EXPERIENCE ON THE FARAKKA
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ISSUE UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES. THE INDIANS HAD NOT BEEN

REALLY SATISFIED WITH THE IBRD INVOLVEMENT ON THE INDUS WATERS, HE SAID, AND DID NOT LIKE THE IDEA OF ANY OUTSIDE PARTY BECOMING INVOLVED IN WHAT REALLY REQUIRED BILATERAL WILL AND AGREEMENT TO RESOLVE. IN THE COURSE OF DISCUSSING THE SALAL DAM NEGOTIATIONS UNDERWAY THIS WEEK WITH THE PAKISTANIS AT THE FOREIGN SECRETARY LEVEL, INDIAN FONSEC MEHTA, OCT. 3, WITHOUT MENTIONING FARAKKA, COMMENTED SPONTANEOUSLY IN SIMILAR TERMS TO POLCOUNSELOR, NOTING THAT THE TROUBLE WITH THE INDUS RIVER ARBITRATION HAD BEEN SUSPICION ON BOTH SIDES OF THE BONA FIDES OF THE "FACT FINDERS." INDIA WAS, OF COURSE NOW COMMITTED BY TREATY TO GO TO A NEUTRAL ARBITER IN THE EVENT OF DISAGREEMENTS ON THE INDUS WATERS (SUCH AS THAT ON THE SALAL DAM), BUT IT WOULD BE VERY RELUCTANT, HE SAID, "TO DO IT AGAIN."

3. WE THINK THAT RATHER THAN AN APPROACH BY AMERSINGHE, THE IRANIANS MAY BE IN A BETTER POSITION THAN ANYONE ELSE TO TALK TO THE INDIANS AND BANGLADESHIS ABOUT THE WISDOM OF TRYING TO GO BACK TO THE CONFERENCE TABLE TO WORK OUT SOME ARRANGEMENT BILATERALLY, POSSIBLY WITH IRAN'S "GOOD OFFICES," RATHER THAN STRUGGLE THROUGH THE ACIDITY OF A UNGA DEBATE. WE RECALL THAT THE BANGLADESHIS WERE EARLIER TALKING ABOUT APPROACHING THE SHAH BUT DO NOT KNOW WHAT THE INDIANS MIGHT THINK OF THIS. THEY WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY WELCOME ANY SUGGESTION TO RETURN THE DISCUSSIONS TO BILATERAL CHANNELS BUT BE MORE LEERY ABOUT ANY DIRECT OR INDIRECT MEDIATION, EVEN BY A COUNTRY WITH WHICH INDIA'S RELATIONS HAVE DEVELOPED AS POSITIVELY (AND FINANCIALLY BENEFICIALLY FOR INDIA) AS IRAN.

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